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**OVER \$4.5 MILLION AWARDED FOR
JAMES RIVER WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS**

December 11, 2018 - The Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) has awarded over \$4.5 million in grants to six partner organizations dedicated to advancing conservation practices and implementing environmental projects to improve the James River's water quality. These multi-year awards are the first for VEE's James River Water Quality Improvement Program and the largest amount ever issued at one time by the Endowment. The \$4.56 million in private grants represents nearly 30% of the \$15.5 million earmarked to be spent to improve the James River over the next several years.

"The Virginia Environmental Endowment's historic role in catalyzing water quality improvement continues with the work of these outstanding partners," said Joseph H. Maroon, VEE Executive Director. "If fully realized, they will accomplish extensive reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution. Such outcomes are needed to accelerate improvements in the health of the James, fill some critical gaps, and bolster other public and private efforts." Maroon added, "VEE is pleased to be joined by Smithfield Foundation in supplementing our funds to address failing septic systems in three communities in the Lower James. In the future, we look forward to partnering with other foundations to invest in additional projects that will help improve the James River."

Grantees will advance key strategic investment priorities in the Upper, Middle, and Lower James River watershed. These include projects strategically targeted to establish streamside buffers, accelerate agricultural conservation, stabilize shorelines, and address failing septic systems.

Combined, these initiatives expect to result in a reduction of over four million pounds of pollution entering the James River annually and the installation of numerous on-the-ground conservation practices, including:

- 30,000 acres of farmland with new conservation practices
- 72,600 trees planted and 960 acres of buffers installed
- 9 miles of stream restoration
- 5 miles of livestock stream exclusion
- 35 septic systems repaired/replaced
- 20 new comprehensive conservation farm plans implemented
- 3,350 linear feet of living shoreline constructed

This year's grant recipients are:

Trout Unlimited: \$480,350 Upper James Home River Initiative

TU's Upper James Home River Initiative will target headwater properties in Highland and Bath Counties in order to assist over 100 residents and landowners with conservation projects such as restoring streams; stabilizing streambanks; restoring riparian buffers; implementing conservation plans for local farmers; and installing livestock exclusion fencing. TU modeled the Initiative after a highly successful program in West Virginia.

James River Association: \$1,612,430 Middle James Riparian Buffer Initiative

Virginia's goal for restoring 60,000 acres of riparian buffers in the James River watershed is only one-third complete. JRA's initiative will target this goal, aiming at the construction of riparian forested buffers of 35 to 100 feet wide in the Middle James region of the watershed. Working with other collaborators, JRA will seek to establish the buffers in priority restoration opportunity areas, thereby achieving the greatest pollution reductions. The program will provide funding for the installation of the buffers, incentives for widening existing buffers, and a three-year oversight period for buffer establishment.

Virginia Department of Forestry: \$750,000 Middle James Forest Buffer Initiative

VDOF will collaborate with landowners and the James River Association to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution through the establishment of streamside buffers on lands in the Middle James region. VEE funding will allow VDOF to hire a riparian buffer coordinator to oversee this effort.

Colonial Soil & Water Conservation District: \$640,000 Expanding Precision Agriculture

The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District will partner with the Henricopolis Soil and Water Conservation District and others to educate and engage farmers and landowners in the Lower James on the benefits of utilizing precision agriculture techniques to inform farmers of the best field decisions available in farming practices. Only 10% of the farmland in the Colonial district utilized precision agriculture in 2017. Healthier farmland, more productive fields, less over-fertilization and a cleaner James will be the result. The Colonial Soil and Water Conservation District serves Charles City, James City, New Kent, and York Counties, as well as the City of Williamsburg.

Virginia Department of Health: \$300,000 Septic System Repair Cost Share Program

Failing septic systems are contaminating shellfish beds and river waters, creating both public health and water quality challenges for the James River. With an additional \$200,000 in support from the Smithfield Foundation, VDH will implement a \$500,000 program for repairing and replacing failed septic systems in parts of James City County, Isle of Wight, and Surry counties. VDH will offer financial incentives on a sliding scale based on income in these targeted regions.

James City County: \$781,900 Living Shoreline Stabilization Project

The Chickahominy Riverfront Park shoreline currently exhibits severe erosion problems, contributing thousands of pounds of sediment to the James River annually. James City County will match VEE funds and build a "living shoreline" along much of the edge of this popular Park, regrading and stabilizing steep slopes, constructing offshore breakwaters, and creating new marshland habitats, reducing sediment pollution to the river from erosion. The Virginia Institute of Marine Science has identified this shoreline as "one of three shore segments of concern" in James City County.

Funding for these projects was provided by Dominion Energy as part of an agreement to mitigate the adverse impacts associated with the construction of the Surry-Skiffes Creek Transmission Line.

For more information about these grants or about the Endowment, please contact Joseph H. Maroon at info@vee.org or (804) 644.5000 or visit vee.org. The Virginia Environmental Endowment (VEE) is a non-profit, grant-making foundation based in Richmond, Virginia that is focused on using its capital, expertise and resources to improve the quality of the environment. The Endowment celebrated its 40th Anniversary in 2017.